

## Scoping Proposal Yette Project

USDA Forest Service, Eastern Region 9,  
Allegheny National Forest, Bradford Ranger District  
McKean County, Pennsylvania

### *Hamilton Township*

*Lots: 11, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 122, 123, 127, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147 Warrants: 3087, 3121, 3404, 4911, 4312, 4915, 4916, 5571, 5574, 5577*

### *Hamlin Township*

*Warrants: 3076, 3077, 3084, 3085, 3086, 3089, 3091, 3399*

### *Lafayette Township:*

*Lots: 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20*

*Warrants: 2244, 2245, 3076, 3084, 3399, 3402, 3404, 3408, 3410, 3413, 3414, 3431, 3432, 3433, 3435*

### *Wetmore Township*

*Lot: 182*

*Warrants: 3086, 3087, 3091, 3092, 3121*

The Forest Service, Allegheny National Forest (ANF), proposes forest management actions within the Yette project area (Vicinity map). The Yette project is a planned, rotational forest management project on the Bradford Ranger District. It includes a response to recent forest health issues that presently exist or are anticipated to occur within the project area. The existing vegetation condition of the project area will be moved to the desired condition as described in the ANF Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) (USDA FS 2007a). The Bradford District Ranger is the responsible official. The decision is whether to approve the proposed action or an alternative to the proposal, or to take no action at this time.

The project area is 29,410 acres and includes 25,518 acres of National Forest System (NFS) lands and 892 acres of private land. Within the project area, proposed actions include: improvements to forest health through tree harvesting and reforestation, treatment of non-native invasive plants, stream restoration, fishery and wildlife habitat improvements, and dispersed camping site management. Transportation actions include adding roads to the Forest Service transportation system, decommissioning roads, and improvements to existing roads.

Details of the project proposals are provided below and on the attached map. The proposal is posted through the Forest Service Schedule of Proposed Actions on the ANF website at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57537>.

The proposed actions are planned within Forest Plan management areas (MA) 2.1, MA 2.2 and MA 3.0. In summary, MA 2.1 consists of a forest of uneven-aged northern or upland hardwood stands with inclusions of conifer, shrub, and herbaceous openings. The area contains mostly large trees with small inclusions of seedlings and saplings (Forest Plan, pages 106 to 108). MA 2.2 is managed for older, late structural forests that link relatively large areas of older forests (core areas) across the landscape (Forest Plan, pages 109 to 112). Whereas, MA 3.0, managed for even-aged management, provides a mixed forest that is a mix of predominantly shade intolerant

and mid-tolerant hardwood stands of various ages and associated understories, and habitat for a diversity of plant and animal species (Forest Plan, pages 113 to 116).

Table 1 shows the known condition of forest structural stages and age classes for both private lands and NFS lands within the project area.

**Table 1. Existing age class condition within the project area non-NFS and NFS lands<sup>1</sup>**

Forest Structural Stage	Age Class, Years	Non-NFS Land, Acres	NFS Lands, Acres	Total Acres	Percent Project Area
Early	0 to 10	0	292	292	1
	11 to 20	0	971	971	3
Young	21 to 50	50	4295	4344	15
Mature	51 to 80	361	1678	2039	7
	81 to 110	0	15,697	15,697	53
	111 to 150	241	4856	5097	17
Non-Forested	-	240	730	970	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>892</b>	<b>25,518</b>	<b>29,410</b>	<b>100</b>

Like most of the ANF, the project area presently shows little early or late structural stage habitat. About 4% of the project area is aged less than 20 years old, and none aged greater than 150 years old. Most of the project area (70%, 20,553 acres) is between 81 to 150 years old. The present condition does not meet the Forest Plan desired condition for early structural stages (Forest Plan errata).

The purpose and need of the Yette project proposals are provided as follows:

- Provide a diversity of vegetation patterns across the landscape that represents well distributed habitats, a range of forest age classes and vegetative stages, a variety of healthy functioning vegetation layers, moderate to well-stocked forest cover, and the variety of vegetation species or forest types necessary to achieve multiple resource objectives and sustain ecosystem health (Forest Plan, page 14);
- Continue to implement and monitor a range of silvicultural and reforestation practices in order to be responsive to emerging issues and regenerate stands to a diversity of tree seedlings of good quality, form and health (Forest Plan, page 14); and,
- Ensure a healthy, diverse, resilient, and well stocked forest is provided in light of several concurrent forest health threats (Forest Plan, pages 14, 15, and 21).
- Address non-native invasive plants (Forest Plan, page 13).
- Enhance wildlife habitat on 1,200 to 1,600 acres each year to provide desired cover and forage conditions (Forest Plan, page 20).
- Restore and enhance stream processes and aquatic habitat diversity for brook trout and other headwater stream fishes (Forest Plan, pages 14, 20, 22, 46, and 80).

<sup>1</sup> Non-FS land acreages and age classification from GIS analysis of historic aerial imagery from various sources dating from 1940 to 2018

- Provide a safe, efficient and economical transportation system that is responsive to public and administrative needs, while having minimal adverse effects on the natural forest ecosystem (Forest Plan, page 16).

## PROPOSED ACTION

### SILVICULTURAL TREATMENTS

Table 2 shows the 3,706 acres of silvicultural treatments (13% of the project area) by MA proposed for the Yette Project. The attached map shows the compartments and stands, and site specific treatments being proposed for treatment. Descriptions of silvicultural treatments are provided in the Forest Plan, pages 64 to 69 and A-18 to A-26. Timber harvest is an outcome of implementing the stand improvements.

**Table 2. Silvicultural actions proposed within the Yette project area.**

Treatment	Management Area	Acres
Group selection to restore understory mature forest conditions. (RUMFC)	2.2	364
Two-aged harvest	2.2	118
Two-aged harvest	3.0	211
Shelterwood/ removal cut with reserves.	3.0	1813
Site preparation/final harvest.	3.0	1200

Reforestation treatments (Table 3) are planned for all silvicultural proposals. The acres of reforestation are at the maximum and would likely be less based on the need as treatments are implemented. Descriptions of reforestation are provided in the Forest Plan, pages 70-72 and A-30-A-36.

**Table 3. Reforestation actions and acres proposed within the Yette Project area.**

Treatment	Acres
Site Preparation, herbicide, weed and release, fence, and plant.	3706
Fertilizer	1383

Regeneration treatments combined with past and previously approved and not yet implemented would create temporary openings in areas (blocks) that would exceed 40 acres in size (Table 4).

**Table 4. Temporary Openings > 40 acres within the Yette Project Area.**

Block	MA	Stands	Acres
1	3.0	456023	45
2	2.2 and 3.0	457020, 457026(BEABR)	92
3	2.2 and 3.0	456007, 456008, 456026(BEABR), 456027, 456029, 456038(BEABR), 456041(BEABR), 457002(BEABR), 457008, 457009, 457012, 457013, 457014(UK), 457019(UK), 457027(BEABR), 457028(BEABR), 45703, 457032, 457033(BEABR), 457040, 457041(BEABR), 457042(UK), 458022,	561

Block	MA	Stands	Acres
		458026(UK), 458039(UK)	
4	3.0	458028(BEABR), 458033(BEABR), 458037	74
5	2.2	458020(BEABR), 458045(BEABR)	88
6	3.0	476027, 476029(BS), 476041(BEABR), 476044(BEABR), 477005, 477011, 477014, 477016, 477031, 477034	217
7	3.0	477038(UK), 477046	56
8	3.0	480019, 480037, 480053(BS), 480056(BS), 480064, 483026	222
9	3.1	480021	40
10	3.0	480013(UK), 480020(UK), 480054, 480062, 480072(UK)	144
11	3.0	481037(UK), 481045(UK)	69
12	3.0	480015, 481009, 481029, 481034, 481041, 481046, 481053, 481054, 482008, 482019, 482027, 482029, 482042, 482045, 483011, 483029, 483030, 483032, 483035, 483036, 483043, 483042, 482049(BEABR), 481038(UK), 482034(UK), 483010(UK), 483018(UK), 482010(BS), 482021(BS), 482025(BS), 483014(BS), 483015(BS), 483017(BS), 483020(BS), 483040(BS), 483047(BS)	993
13	3.0	484011, 484013, 484016, 484018, 484020, 484021, 484022, 484023, 484037, 484056, 484057, 484018(BS)	371
14	3.0	485011, 485014, 485015, 485025(ES), 485026	100
15	3.0	474006, 474009, 474033	81
16	3.0	474008, 474011(UK), 474012, 474039, 474054, 474055	95
17	3.0	472001(BS), 472004(UK), 472006(UK), 472039	78
18	3.0	472037, 472038	50
19	3.0	464001, 464002, 464003, 464004, 464005, 464028, 464030, 465003, 465004, 465005, 465016	423
20	3.0	462004(UK), 462005(UK), 462007, 462045, 462051, 462052, 462027(UK), 462053(UK), 463004, 463007, 463009, 463020(BEABR), 463023, 463024(UK), 463040, 463042, 463044(UK)	420
21	3.0	463006(UK), 463014(BEABR), 463015(BEABR), 463037(BEABR)	64
22	3.0	461010, 461033(UK), 461036, 461037, 461041, 461045, 461047, 461049, 461050, 461051, 461062	253
23	3.0	462044	40
24	3.0	462019(UK), 462021, 462030, 462047	143
25	2.2 and 3.0	460003, 460004, 460006(UK), 460007, 460008(UK), 460009, 460019, 460021(UK), 460029(UK), 460029, 460053, 460054(UK), 460055(UK), 460057, 460062, 460066(UK), 460067, 460069, 460070, 461015, 461016, 461017, 461034, 461035, 461060	748
26	3.0	460030, 460044, 460061	130
27	3.0	460014, 460024, 460042, 460042(UK), 460068	160
28	3.0	459020, 459049(UK)	47
<b>Bradford Emerald Ash Borer Remediation EA (BEABR), Upper Kinzua EA (UK), Blacksnake EA (BS), Eastside EIS (ES)</b>			

## NON-NATIVE INVASIVE PLANT TREATMENTS

Non-native invasive plant species (NNIP) have become established within the project area and there is a need to implement treatment activities that will limit the further introduction and/or spread of these species and conserve forest resources in a manner that presents the least hazard to humans and maintains or restores forest resources (USDA- FS 2007a, pg. 13). An 'invasive species' means, with regard to a particular ecosystem, a non-native organism whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm, or harm to human, animal, or plant health. A 'Non-native species' or 'alien species' means, with respect to a particular ecosystem, an organism, including its seeds, eggs, spores, or other biological material capable of propagating that species, that occurs outside of its natural range (Executive Order 13751, FSM 2900).

Information/research on non-native invasive plant species is readily available on websites such as: the Forest Service Invasive Species Program website <http://www.fs.fed.us/invasivespecies/> and the PA Department of Conservation of Natural Resources <https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/Conservation/WildPlants/InvasivePlants/Pages/default.aspx> . Non-native invasive plant species occupy available growing space and use nutrients that could be used by more desired native species, often lack their natural biotic controls that coevolved with them at their place of origin to keep them in check. There is often a lag phase between first introduction and rapid expansion of the non-native invasive plants. Non-invasive plants, if left unchecked, will limit many uses on lands now and for future generations.

### Proposed Action

Nonnative invasive plant treatment would occur on approximately 1,200 acres throughout the project area using a combination of manual, mechanical, and herbicide treatments, or all three over the next 10 years. Manual treatment could include pulling, digging, or hand-roughing. Mechanical treatment could include brush-cutting, mowing, or removal by motorized equipment. Herbicide treatment could include the use of glyphosate, sulfometuron methyl, or both, and would be applied in accordance with Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines. These combinations of treatments could occur several times during a growing season, or over a period of several years until the infestations have been effectively treated. Due to the nature of non-native invasive plants, additional infestations and species from the Allegheny National Forest Invasive Plant Species of Concern list could be treated if found within the project area, consistent with applicable Forest Plan direction. Also, if the ANF Forest Plan is amended in the future to include new chemicals for use on non-native invasive plants, they would be assessed for use within this project area in the future as well.

## WILDLIFE AND FISHERY HABITAT AND STREAM IMPROVEMENTS

Table 5 provides the wildlife habitat improvements being proposed in the Yette project area.

**Table 5. Wildlife habitat improvements.**

Treatment	Compartment/Stand	Acres
Mow strips, plant soft mast producing trees & shrubs along with conifer groups, add individual fences and crib fences, replace and/or remove damaged fences and plantings where needed, prune existing fruit trees, till/lime/fertilize/seed all	457/34; 458/38; 460/25,39,48; 461/30,48; 462/49; 463/28,30; 474/50,51,52; 477/9,28;	72

**Table 5. Wildlife habitat improvements.**

Treatment	Compartment/Stand	Acres
areas where possible with warm season grass & forb mix, and install a variety of new nesting boxes.	480/23; 481/16; 483/7,9,46; 484/25	
Plant soft mast producing shrubs, soft mast producing trees, and conifer groups, add individual fences and crib fences, till/lime/fertilize/seed areas where possible with warm season grass & forb mix, and install a variety of nesting boxes. In 477/16, expand out from .12 acre opening in order to create 2 acre opening. Opening is abandoned, overgrown, and capped OGM site. Access to site is grown in.	460/30,61; 477/16	5.25
Under plant 10% of stands with shrubs (service berry, spice bush, chokeberry, elderberry) and groups of white pine.	460/29; 462/30,52; 474/9,12,33; 477/16; 481/15,54; 483/13,29,35; 484/16	52
Release 40 to 50 large mast producing hophornbeam within 0.30 acre area located in 461/35. Release and reserve .5 acre to 2 acre groups of seedling and sapling stage eastern hemlock within remainder of stands listed.	460/42,53,67; 461/16,35; 477/46; 483/30	8
Enhance existing vernal pool by enlarging the pool surface area. Conduct pool enhancement late summer early fall when young herptiles are mobile. Restore adjacent opening around vernal pool with soft mast producing shrub species that favor wet sites.	483/13	0.75

This project proposed to fall up to 160 trees per mile into streams and onto floodplains. By doing so, stream processes such as ground water infiltration, discharge rates, and low flow rates as well as large wood functions such as creating pools, adding protective cover, trapping and sorting of spawning gravel can be restored or improved. (Table 6).

**Table 6. Stream and fishery habitat proposed treatments.**

Treatment	Stream Miles
Level 1: Fell trees into streams and move into place by grip hoist or winch.	34.1
Level 2: Combination of chainsaws with winching the logs and tops with a grip hoist/other equipment to place in the stream.	6.6
Level 3: Excavators will be used to dig up rootwads from the uplands and place these rootwads and logs into the designated sections.	0.57

This project also proposes to improve pH and alkalinity in at least four miles of streams in the project area. These streams in the Mead Run area are susceptible to acid precipitation due to their location, shallow soils and parent geology with low buffering capacity. A lime application will be added to soils where stormflow will travel to streams and improve alkalinity. This treatment would improve water quality and conditions for aquatic organisms in perennial streams in the Mead Run watershed.

## TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS

Table 7 provides the transportation actions being proposed in the project area.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 7: Transportation Improvement**

Road Activity <sup>3</sup>	Total Mileage	Proposed <sup>4</sup> / Existing Road Numbers (Miles)			
<b>Add Existing Non-System Corridor to National Forest Transportation System</b> (which may involve road reconstruction, construction, and/or realignment) <sup>1</sup>	2.3	FR 187CA		0.3	
		FR 313AA		0.8	
		FR 478B		0.4	
		FR 628 Extension		0.4	
		FR 630		0.4	
<b>Previously Approved - Add Existing Non-System Corridor to National Forest Transportation System</b>	1.6	FR 142BC		0.6	
		FR 318 Extension		1.0	
<b>Road Decommissioning</b> - Includes NFS Road and non-system road/corridors	16.0	FR 457		0.3	
		Non-System Roads		15.7	
<b>Long Skid on Existing Corridor</b>	0.3	Non-System Roads		0.3	
<b>Proposed Road Management Changes</b>	5.3	<b>Road Number</b>	<b>Existing Status</b>	<b>Proposed Status</b>	<b>Miles</b>
		FR 142B	Closed	Restricted	1.3
		FR 142BA	Closed	Restricted	0.6
		FR 142BB	Closed	Restricted	0.2
		FR 142C	Closed	Restricted	1.0
		FR 456B	Closed	Restricted	1.2
		FR 456C	Closed	Restricted	1.0

Trees that pose as a road hazard (diseased, dead, dying, or excessively leaning trees) would be felled and merchantable hazard trees would be harvested along roads of the project area. Equipment would remain on improved road surfaces. Hazard trees not accessible from roads would be cut and left on the site.

<sup>3</sup> In addition to these changes, failing culverts will be identified, prioritized and replaced.

<sup>4</sup> Proposed Forest Road numbers

## MITIGATION

Proposed actions are designed to minimize potential effects by meeting Forest Plan standards and guidelines. Additional mitigation measures may be developed during the project design to provide further protection to water resources; sensitive soils; threatened, endangered and sensitive species and their habitats; cultural resources, scenery, and recreation sites, as needed. Reserved and outstanding mineral rights would be maintained.

The North Country National Scenic Trail crosses the project area and three stands proposed for vegetative treatment. An initial mitigation that has been identified is a 100' buffer on both sides of the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) where it crosses these treatment units.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Depending on topography and silviculture prescriptions, these buffers may be widened. Wider buffers will be determined in consultation with the North Country Trail Association.



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